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PEACEFUL NIGHT, NORMANDIE
By Alexis Jean Fournier

—Collection Dr. Soren P. Rees, Minneapolis

The Art of Alexis Jean Fournier

By THOMAS SHREWSBURY PARKHURST

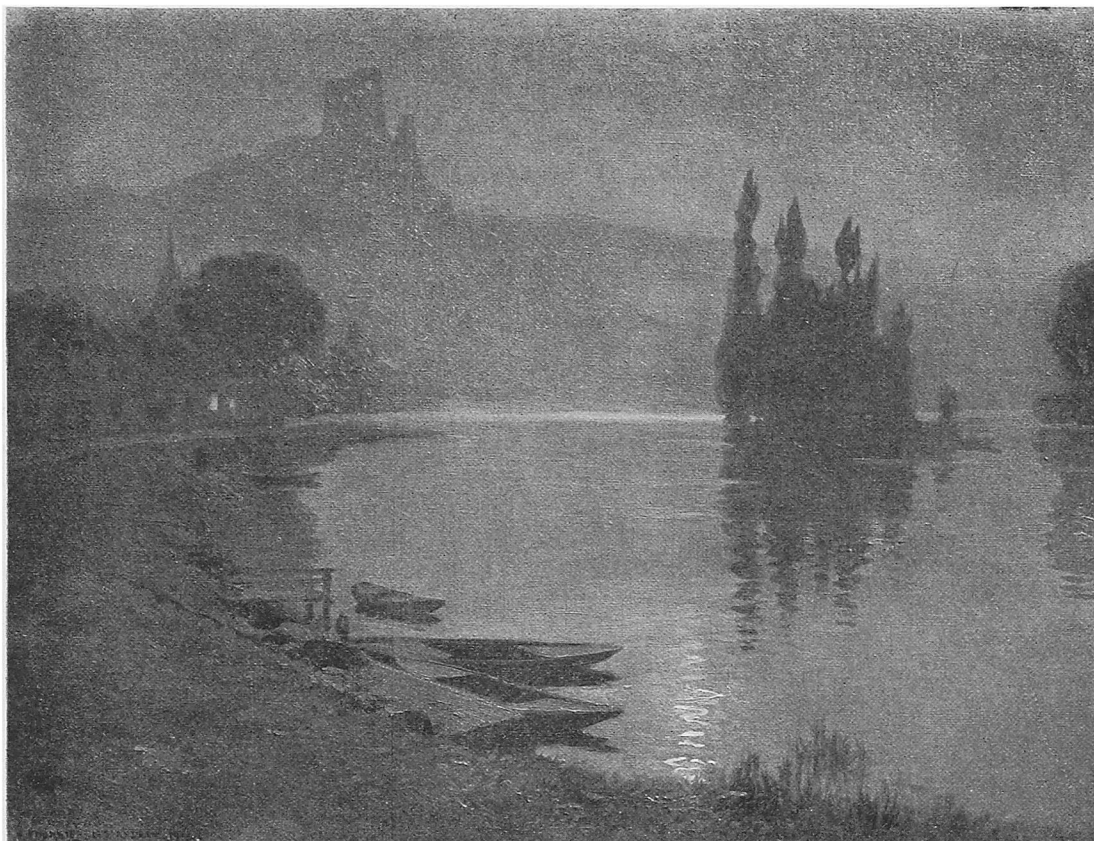
IT IS encouraging in these days of artistic unrest and pictorial fads, when so many are striving for a short cut to fame, to come upon a worker who insists upon a thorough knowledge of performance and craftsmanship in his paintings. When, in years to come, American art of today is dealt with by dispassioned historians, a chapter will certainly be devoted to Alexis Jean Fournier, who, being in close sympathy with the spirit of the Barbizon men, is their proper and truthful historian.

This, however, is not to be understood as an implication against his Americanism, nor a suggestion that his art is an offshoot of French art. It merely refers to his canvases—the only studies of the kind worth noting—of the homes and haunts of the men who are justly

celebrated as the pioneers of modern expression in paint.

In studying the individuality of each of this progressive body of men, and acquainting himself with their haunts, Mr. Fournier has himself become intensely individual, and this collection of canvases are unlike any others that are or have been attempted. They cannot be catalogued as representing any ism of the passing hour; on the contrary, they are an absolutely individual expression of an intense and sincere artist, who follows his own judgment in pursuing his artistic ideals.

Should you ask Mr. Fournier for an explanation of his personal fondness for Barbizon school paintings he would answer characteristically, "I am merely a painter who feels very deeply the beauty and joy of life, and my



PEACEFUL NIGHT—ON THE SEINE
By Alexis Jean Fournier

—Collection Wm. H. Wise, Chicago
(First Picture sold at the Panama-Pacific Exposition)



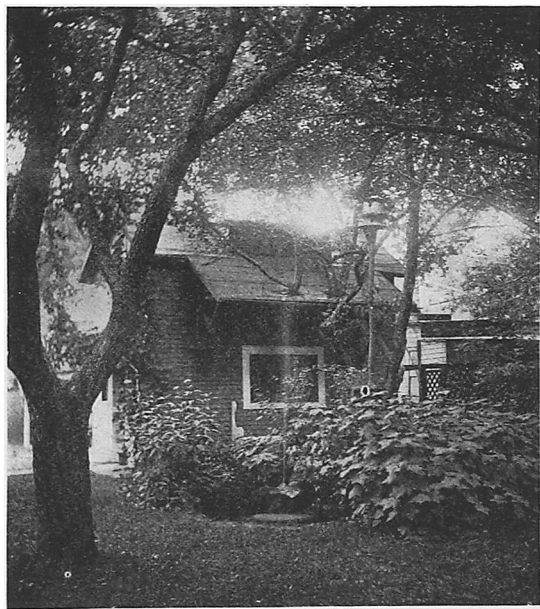
PEACE
By Alexis Jean Fournier

—Decorative Panel for the home of
Mr. S. C. Pratt, Buffalo, N. Y.

sole aim is to express it beautifully." And so it is not unnatural that he has devoted so many years to painting the romantic and idyllic retreats, whose woods and streams contained the homes of these emotional and famous men who also expressed the beauty and joy of life.

It would be interesting to be able to speak at much length concerning each one of these canvases and to describe the charm which abides therein. This, however, is not possible, consequently the dominant characteristics will be touched upon, especially their impressions of dainty elegance. His interpretation of these favored spots has sought to combine delicacy of sentiment with refinement of manner, and to express gracefully the subtle charm of the subject. He has kept this aim in view consistently in his choice of materials as well as in the manner of dealing with the subjects, allowing his instinctive appreciation of nature's gentleness and quiet charm to guide his preferences.

The entire collection shows the artist to be temperamentally averse to anything akin to exaggeration, or even to that accentuation of facts commonly accepted as permissible devices through which effectiveness can be gained. He proves that it is possible to capture beauty without lapsing into prettiness, to



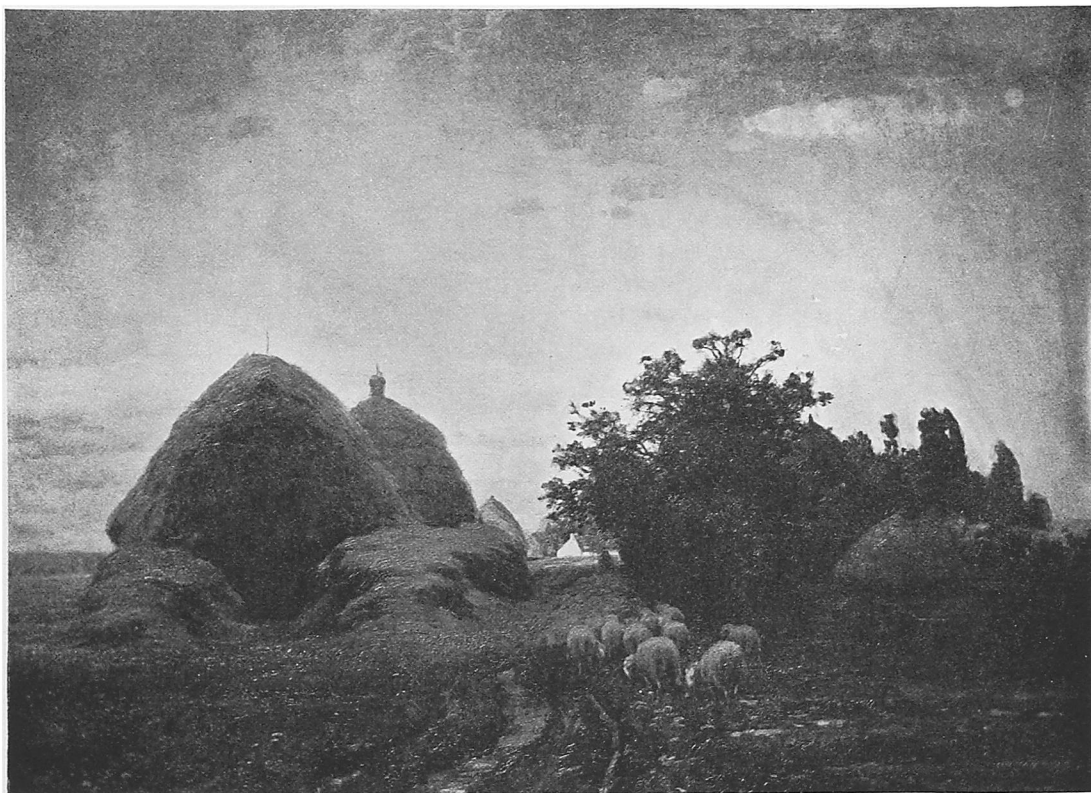
DOLL HOUSE: BUNGALOW EAST AURORA, N. Y.



ALEXIS JEAN FOURNIER

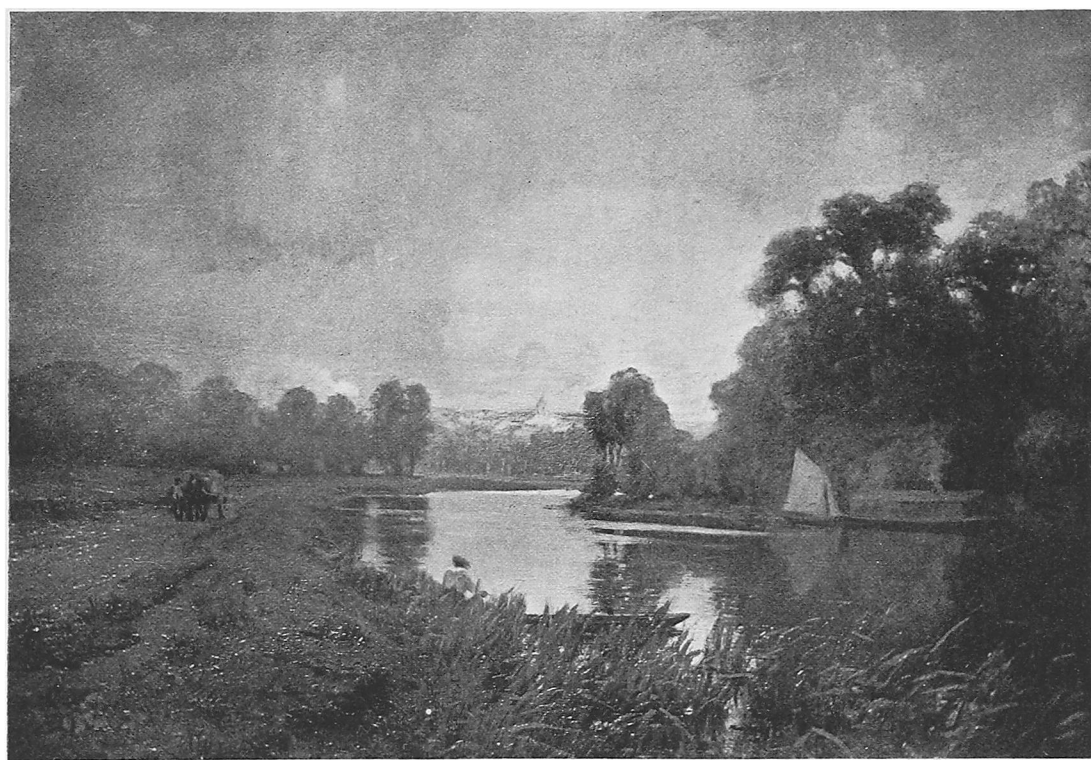
achieve a refinement without sacrificing strength. It is these essentials which render the collection so valuable. One may not expect the idyllic and rose embowered home of Corot to be portrayed in paint by an ultra-modern artist whose flippant brush work and indiscriminate generosity of pigment would destroy all the gentle repose and pastoral tranquillity of Corot's natural environment.

In looking over this collection it becomes most evident that attractiveness need not be a feeble defect, that refinement is not necessarily one of the vices of incompetence, but rather that they are essentials to a perfect rendering of the highest and most sympathetic themes. The border line between delicacy and



STORM CLOUDS
By Alexis Jean Fournier

—Collection A. H. Woodward, Minneapolis



ALONG THE RIVER OISE, FRANCE
By Alexis Jean Fournier

—Barbizon Series



THE STORM, NORMANDIE
By Alexis Jean Fournier

—Collection Mr. Chas. Seamans, Chicago

weakness, between elegance and artificiality is so finely marked that only a strong man who has himself in hand may hope to succeed in keeping within its limits. To be vigorous is an easy matter; a judicious accent, a measure of appropriate dilation, may, without falsification, be managed satisfactorily, but he who thus paints is never certain of his powers and such devices do not deceive the discerning. A man of this kind dare not attempt refinement for his sense of values and of accuracy is not developed to a point of recognizing the boundary line between refinement and triviality.

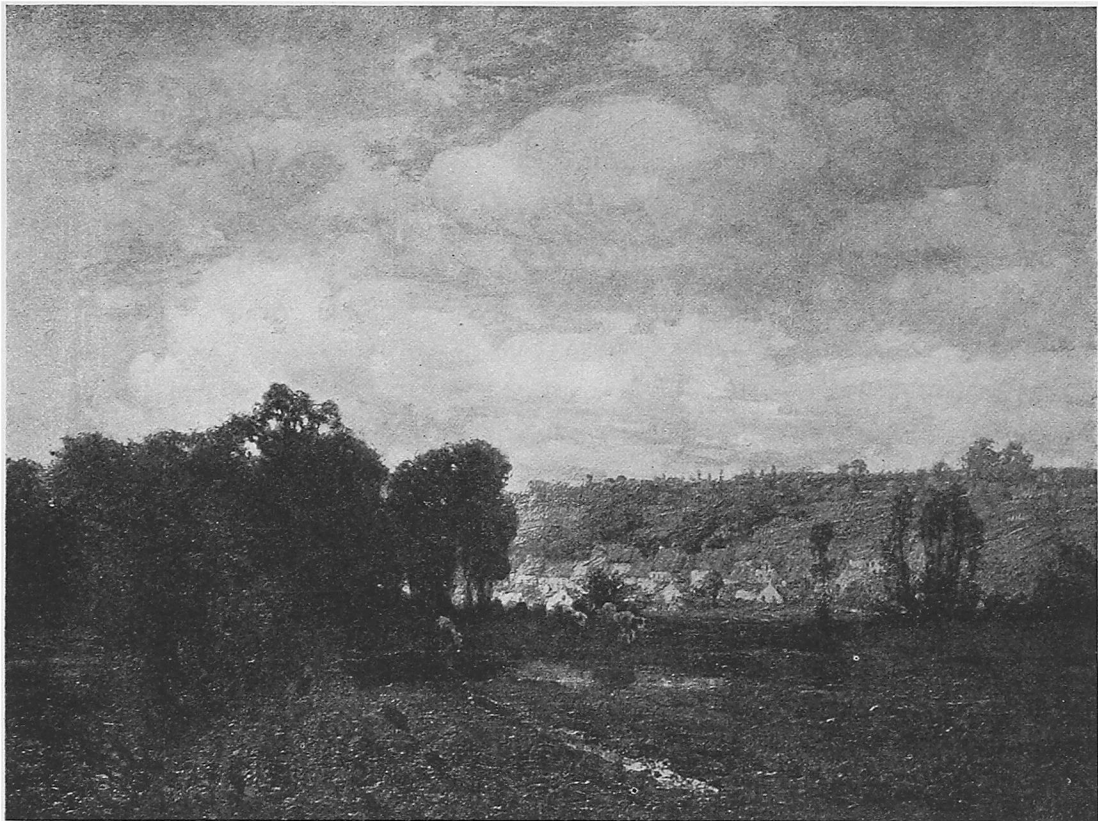
It is for this reason that Mr. Fournier has made such an appeal in this collection of paintings of the homes and haunts of the Barbizon men with their design, their luminous color, their subtle delicacy, all so free from any taint of weakness and carrying such a distinctive air of truth. In each can clearly be perceived the effort of a painter who has such a

thorough acquaintance with facts as to prevent any fumbling or hesitancy, whose insight is too acute to allow inadequacy. He displays the finely cultivated taste of one whose perceptions and analysis of nature are selective and keen, commanding for their expression an adequate pictorial entirety.

How faithfully he has adhered to these ideals becomes apparent when any of his paintings are examined. In all of them, from whatever period of his career, there is to be noted the same indication of the true artist, the same consideration of vital principles. The illustrations herewith demonstrate quite truthfully his methods and principles. They are instructive as portrayals of the sentiment which determines his outlook, they so clearly demonstrate that each motif has been dealt with in such a manner that all its fascination, its charm, its character are brought plainly before us.

No two of these paintings are treated in the same manner as no two of them are enough alike to call for the same handling, and yet in all of them is the mark of a thoughtful, well trained mind. The artist does not desire to advertise his cleverness of execution, which would imply more interest in the manner of performance than in its message, what he does maintain is balance of expression, suggestion and that suitable reflection of harmony which nature always presents. Should he paint

a farmyard or the corner of the village or a chateau in the moonlight, one is at once convinced of the accuracy of his presentments and reason is satisfied of their fidelity. At the same time there will be observed to emanate from each canvas an intangible poetic feeling which transforms and idealizes the subject. Thus in his art Alexis Jean Fournier is at once an apostle of realism and of idealism and this is a practically unique distinction.



VALMONDOIS. FRANCE
By Alexis Jean Fournier

—Collection Wm. H. Wise, Chicago